The German Historicist Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), by Frederick C. Beiser

will appear in another study" (355, n. 1). Given the heavily historical nature of the curriculum in these Protestant and Roman Catholic centers of theological learning, the story told here by Elizabeth A. Clark will likely be extended. Thus we may look forward to further close interrogation in search of the levels and types of inquiry that have fed the present-day shape of university-based late ancient Christian studies in the United States.

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Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, xii, 600 pp., Hardcover, £ 65,00, ISBN 978-0-19-969155-5.

In 1936, Friedrich Meinecke published his grand two-volume *Die Entstehung des Historismus*. This book retells Meinecke's story in light of later research. Frederick C. Beiser surveys the historicist tradition in Germany from the middle of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, offering an updated account, in Meinecke's words, of 'one of the greatest intellectual revolutions experienced by Western thought'.

Beiser focuses on thirteen individuals, some better known than others: J. A. Chladenius (1710–59), Justus Möser (1720–94), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Friedrich Karl von Savigny (1779–1861), Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–84), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915), Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), Emil Lask (1875–1915), Georg Simmel (1858–1918), and Max Weber (1864–1920). He carefully and methodically exposits the main ideas of each thinker, analyses the consistency and success of their arguments, and interprets the position of each in the broader historicist tradition. As demonstrated in his previous books, in which he superbly traversed the perilous philosophical landscape of the German *Aufklärung* and the age of Romanticism, he is quite well suited for the task.

The historicists, Beiser contends, shared the ambition of legitimating history as a science (*Wissenschaft*) in the face of the Enlightenment and the legacy of rationalism stretching from, for example, Descartes to Leibniz to Christian Wolff. Justifying the scientific status of history was essentially a philosophical enterprise, involving reflection upon basic epistemological issues; it was not concerned with speculative philosophy of history. As a tradition, therefore, historicism emerged in the late eighteenth century 'when historians began to reflect phi-

losophically, or when philosophers began to reflect about history' (8). This concept of historicism excludes many historians who were not philosophers and includes many philosophers who were not historians. Noticeably absent are the great figures of Hanoverian Göttingen: J. C. Gatterer, J. S. Pütter, and A. L. Schlözer. Beiser defends their exclusion on the grounds that his task 'is not to trace the rise in the scientific status of history but only to reconstruct the attempts to justify that status' (9). He takes the same approach to Hegel and Marx.

Like Meinecke, Beiser sees two defining principles of historicism. The first is the principle of individuality. Generally speaking, this principle states that the goal of historical enquiry is the individual, whether person, event, nation, action, or culture, which exists at a particular place and time. The second principle is holism, which states the whole is prior to its parts and irreducible to them. The very identity of individuals depends on their place within a wider cultural, historical, and social world. On this view, societies and states are not composites, but indivisible wholes determining the identity of their parts. Invoking Droysen and the 'hermeneutical circle' that goes back to August Boeckh and Friedrich Schleiermacher, Beiser explains: 'The individual is understood in the whole, and the whole is understood from the individual' (300).

Recognising that recent scholars like Hans Peter Reill, Georg Iggers, and Jörn Rüsen, among others, have largely dispelled the myth of the Enlightenment as an ahistorical age, Beiser nevertheless stresses the discontinuity of historicism with the Enlightenment. He discerns three fundamental breaks. Where Enlightenment voices like Rousseau and Hume spoke of a permanent human nature throughout history, the historicists insisted that human identity depends on one's distinct time and place. Against the tradition of natural law championing the values of eighteenth-century Europe, the leading nineteenth-century historicists held that the values of a given age depend entirely on their specific, unique contexts and cannot be universalised for all ages and cultures. Finally, the historicist tradition began at least in part as a resistance movement to eighteenth-century political modernisation. Friedrich II in Prussia, Joseph II in Austria, and the revolutionary government in France represented centralising bureaucracies and enacted 'enlightened' policies aimed at achieving a rationalised legal uniformity. In opposition to this, the early historicists – Möser, Herder, and Savigny – defended regional autonomy, diversity, and the importance of local roots. Later historicists like Weber, Beiser asserts, only acquiesced to the inevitability of the centralised state.

The great achievement of the book is its remarkably lucid presentation of difficult philosophical arguments. The chapter on Chladenius, whom Beiser identifies as the German counterpart to the eminent Italian thinker Giambattista Vico, is highly commendable for raising the profile of the long forgotten pro-

fessor. An orthodox Lutheran who nevertheless harboured some Wolffian sympathies, Chladenius taught various subjects in theology and philosophy at Wittenberg, Leipzig, and Erlangen. His magisterial work was his *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft* (1752), hailed as 'the founding document of the historicist tradition' (62). Beiser serves as a brilliant guide to Chladenius's thought, adroitly taking the reader through Chladenius's arguments in favour of historical perspectivalism, the doctrine that historical knowledge is relative to a historian's or spectator's viewpoint, together with his defence of historical knowledge against scepticism. The treatment of Möser, an administrator in the government of Osnabrück, is equally praiseworthy. Möser's chief claim to fame rests on his incomplete *Osnabrückische Geschichte* (1768–80), an extensive and bold history of his small hometown in northwestern Germany. The work was widely hailed as the first to integrate the study of culture, economics, and politics of the German Middle Ages. Beiser interprets Möser as a profound analyst, long before the romantics, of 'the basic problem of modernity: the rise of rootlessness, the loss of belonging, the decline of attachment to time and place' (66–67).

Along the way, Beiser offers a brief account of history's emergence as an autonomous academic discipline in the context of the modern German university. Even at the eighteenth-century reform universities of Halle (1694) and Göttingen (1737), historians still remained propaedeutic educators for the faculties of theology and law, responsible for the training of future cameralists. Beiser thus highlights the establishment of an independent faculty of history for the first time at the new University of Berlin (1810) under B. G. Niebuhr and the subsequent proliferation of German lectures on *Historik* in the second half of the nineteenth century as indicators of historicism's success.

In 1922, Ernst Troeltsch published his famous article, 'Die Krise des Historismus'. Since then, it has become commonplace to speak of a crisis of historicism in the twilight of the long nineteenth century or the early decades of the twentieth. Beiser questions whether there really was a crisis of historicism after all. He recognises the demise of historicism's influence in German intellectual life from the time of the Weimar Republic, but doubts the objective existence of any crisis premised on some tragic flaw or inconsistency within the historicist tradition itself. Instead, Beiser points to the very achievements of the historicist agenda as the reason for historicism's decline. History became an autonomous faculty in the universities on par with the natural sciences. '[H]aving achieved what it set out to do, historicism did not need to exist anymore. On this reading, historicism was not an abject failure, but an astonishing success. Indeed, since it continues to exercise such enormous influence, it never really died at all. It continues to live in all of us, and it is fair to say that, as heirs of Meinecke's revolution, we are all historicists today' (24).

For a book already at 600 pages, it is perhaps too much to ask for a discussion of non-German contributions to the historicist tradition or for more discussion of the roles that theology and philology played in the development of the historicist tradition. Occasionally the dates for J. G. Droysen – author of *Grundriß der Historik*, professor at Berlin, and founder of the so-called 'Prussian school of history' – appear to be mixed up with those of his son Gustav (1838–1908), also a historian. The book would have benefitted from greater attention to political and institutional contexts, a concern that the author himself notes in the preface (vii). Even so, Beiser has produced an excellent and important introduction to the main historicist thinkers. This is a book thoroughly researched, expertly focused, and well worth reading.

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Matthias Dreher, Gotthard Jasper (Hg.), *Rudolf Bultmann – Paul Althaus. Briefwechsel 1929–1966.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012, VIII, 132 S., Leinen, € 39,00, ISBN 978-3-16-150981-0.

Mit diesem Band wird eine Edition von Rudolf Bultmanns Briefwechsel eröffnet, die Christoph Landmesser verantwortet. Verglichen mit dem Briefwechsel zwischen Rudolf Bultmann und Friedrich Gogarten, herausgegeben 2002 von Hermann Göckeritz, und dem 2009 erschienenen Briefwechsel zwischen Bultmann und Martin Heidegger handelt es sich bei der überlieferten Korrespondenz zwischen Althaus und Bultmann zwar nur um einen kleinen Bestand von 17 Postkarten und Briefen Bultmanns an den Erlanger Systematiker und drei Postkarten und einen Brief (in Abschrift) von Althaus an den Marburger Neutestamentler. Gotthard Jasper, der im Auftrag der Erben eine große Althaus-Biographie vorbereitet, vermutet, dass Bultmann die an ihn gerichteten Briefe nach Althaus' Tod im Mai 1966 weggeworfen bzw. vernichtet hat. Doch was man nun lesen kann, ist theologisch wie politisch spannend. Sichtbar werden Berührungspunkte zwischen einem Theologen der Lutherrenaissance und einem Dialektischen Theologen, gerade in der Kritik der „liberalen Theologie". Zwar stritten Bultmann und Althaus über zentrale Fragen der Christologie. Übereinstimmung gab es jedoch in der Kritik an Eugenik und „Rassehygiene". In einem Brief vom 18. September 1933, in dem er Althaus für dessen kritischen Aufsatz über das „Unwerte Leben" dankte, trat Bultmann für aktive ärztliche Sterbehilfe ein: „Ich würde – wohl bewußt der Gefahr! – dem Arzt die Freiheit konzedieren, das Ende eines Lebens,